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DRAFT PROPOSAL - EAST TIMOR DOCUMENTARY

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BACKGROUND

Timor is an island about 300 miles north of Australia at the eastern tip of a string of Indonesian islands beginning in the west with Sumatra and Java. To the east lies Irian Jaya (once West New Guinea) taken over by the Indonesians in the 50's despite Australian objections. To the north lie the Moluccan islands whose expatriates still agitate hopelessly in Holland for independence from Indonesian control.

The island was halved by European colonialists. West Timor was Dutch and eventually became part of Indonesia. East Timor was Portuguese and developed a separate culture and national identity. As Elizabeth Traube, an anthropologist at Wesleyan, has pointed out - Timor, for better or worse, is a product of its colonial past.

> Over the past three centuries Portugese administrative and economic policies have interacted with and influenced the indigenous cultures of East Timor, generating a distinctive situation which contrasts markedly even with that on the western half of the island. The point is that however messy it may make our maps, history has severed East Timor from the other territories now comprising the Republic of Indonesia. One can point to objective differences in demographic, ecological, economic, social and political conditions. But what is perhaps even more significant is that the people of East Timor do not perceive their interests as coincident with those of their powerful neighbor.

In April of 1974, as the Portuguese announced their intention to decolonize East Timor, three political parties were organized: FRETILIN, UDT, and APODETI. APODETI, headed by a collaborator with the brutal Japanese occupation during World War II and favoring unification with Indonesia, was never a factor. The UDT was comprised mainly of the Timorese administrative elite. FRETILIN was a moderate, reformist, national front which tried actively to recruit support in the countryside. Its main support was intellectuals and students.

At first UDT was the most popular party, but as it groped for a political program and vascillated on the question of independence from Indonesia, its support eroded. Many UDT supporters switched their allegiance to FRETILIN's uncompromising nationalism. By February one Australian journalist estimated FRETILIN's support at 60% of the population, UDT's at 10%, and 25 to 30% as being illiterate, apolitical, or just too remote to participate in any voting process.

In January 1975, FRETILIN and UDT formed a coalition to ensure an orderly transition of power from the Portuguese. By this time, Portugal was involved with its own revolution and under great internal pressure to decolonialize quickly, no matter what the consequences. The UDT-FRETILIN coalition took over some of the administrative functions of the colony. In May UDT pulled out of the coalition, realizing that under free elections they would hold little power. In August UDT staged a coup and the Portuguese pulled out completely, even withdrawing the island's only doctor. After two weeks of bloody fighting, FRETILIN reestablished control.

FRETILIN tried to persuade the Portuguese to come back and administer the transfer of power. The Portuguese - possibly having made a deal with the Indonesians or just suffering from the unstable political situation at home - refused. Faced with chaos FRETILIN took over administration of the territory. The Indonesians began attacks on the border and sealed off access to journalists from West Timor. However, for the next three months, Australian journalists and even an Australian aid mission observed FRETILIN's administration. Their impression was generally favorable. The head of the mission, a former Australian consul in Timor, later wrote:

> The FRETILIN administration was surprisingly effective in reestablishing law and order, and in restoring essential services to the main towns... The FRETILIN administration had many shortcomings, but it clearly enjoyed widespread support from the population, including many hitherto UDT supporters. In October, Australian relief workers visited most parts of Timor and, without exception, they reported that there was no evidence of any insecurity or any hostility of FRETILIN. Indeed, FRETILIN leaders were welcomed warmly and spontaneously in all main centers by crowds of Timorese.

FRETILIN continued to beseech Portugal to reenter and other nations to send observers. However, by October, 1975, Indonesian pressure had become a full scale border war. Five Australian journalists, including a film crew, died during the fall of Balibó, 10 kilometers from the border. In November, as the New York Times reported the Indonesians on "their best behavior" because their arms aid package was due for renewal, systematic bombing raids were going over East Timor.

Portugal and Australia refused to become actively involved. With American approval and American weapons, the Indonesians refused to negotiate. Seeing no alternative, FRETILIN reluctantly declared East Timor independent. On December 2, Australia warned its citizens to get out. On December 6, President Ford and Henry Kissinger visited Jakarta. According to the Los Angeles Times, Kissinger "told newsmen in Jakarta that the United States would not recognize the FRETILIN-declared republic and 'the United States understands Indonesia's position on the question.'" As Kissinger and Ford were in the air between Jakarta and Honolulu, the Indonesians invaded in earnest.

The Indonesians waged a classic counter-insurgency compaign, taking over the cities and roads, bombing and naplaming the countryside, and moving one-third of the population from their original homes. Within the first

year of the invasion, the State Department claimed about 10,000 Timorese had been killed. The Indonesian foreign minister admitted at least 50,000 had died. Most outside observers estimated the casualties as 100,000 out of a population of 600,000.

There was almost a complete news blackout in the American press. The few articles that appeared were misreported, depicting the Indonesian invasion as support of non-existant "pro-Indonesian forces." Eye witness accounts by Australian journalists, Portuguese priests, refugees, and FRETILIN were ignored. Only in the last months of 1979 did the New York Times hesitantly question American involvement.

The Australians have had an affinity with the Timorese since World War II when they fought together against the Japanese and the Timorese lost 50,000 out of a population of 500,000. Accordingly, the Australian press has been less timid. There were filmed reports of the border fighting until a film crew was killed by the Indonesians in October, 1975. There are also journalists who stayed through the invasion. However, the Australian government in the end has always kept in line with American strategic considerations. "Fraser Given Blunt Warning at Washington Talks: 'Don't Anger Jakarta': U.S. Protecting Indon Channel for its N-Subs," read the headline in one Australian paper after Ford and Prime Minister Fraser met.

The East Timorese, like the Cambodians or the Kurds, were sacrificed to the interests of big nation politics. The United States has decided to forego any "human rights" consideration in favor of retaining Indonesia as an ally. The deepwater straits off East Timor are considered strategically crucial for moving American strike forces from the Pacific to the

Indian oceans. Furthermore, Indonesia is an oil producing, pro-American, Moslem country when such allies are hard to find. It is a big country - over 130 million - and a potentially lucrative trading partner. Business interest is heightened by the possibilities of oil reserves in the shallow ocean between Timor and Australia. Indonesia, in turn, enlists American support in its quest to incorporate all the southeast Asian islands and become the dominant force in the area. This Indonesian imperialism has swept over East Timor's legitimate claim to autonomy. Australia, with a population of over 14 million, watches the spread of Indonesian hegemony nervously, but it does not interfere.

A few thousand ethnic Chinese have been able to bribe their way out of East Timor. They are now crowded into refugee camps outside Lisbon. They are intimidated by fear of Indonesian reprisals against relatives back in Timor.

Now, four years after the invasion, Indonesia keeps Timor sealed off from the outside world except for carefully controlled visits by relief agencies. The population dislocation and bombing have caused massive famines. The head of the Catholic Relief Service for Indonesia described the situation: "I have been doing this sort of work for 14 years, but East Timor is the worst I have ever seen." Facts are hard to come by, but the New York Times speculates that the death toll may be 200,000, almost a third of the population.

FRETILIN continues to control over half the countryside and refuses to give up. They fight with the support of a population that by now has ample reason to hate the Indonesians. FRETILIN also presses Timor's claims to autonomy within the U.N. which refuses to sanction the Indonesian take-over. The situation remains in a virtual stalemate which might be broken

if public opinion can be marshalled behind the Timorese struggle. However, the state department will not exert pressure unless the issue of Timor becomes a public embarrassment. With the present lack of interest in the American press, it is an unlikely possibility.

THE FILM

The story of East Timor and the question about its future are not simple. It is a tragedy that has not been reported and that continues unnoticed. We propose an hour long, color documentary as a crucial first step to remedy this situation. A movie can be used by FRETILIN for organizing and fund raising. At the same time, through international television, a film can reach a vast audience. Because Timor is an obscure issue at the moment, it is all the more important to make a documentary that clearly tells the story of what has happened and realistically appraises future possibilities.

Although Timor is now closed off to journalists, movie footage and stills of the country are available. FRETILIN has documentary footage of Timor before the Indonesian invasion. Stills of the same period are available from a variety of sources - anthropologists, Australian journalists, the Portuguese government, and FRETILIN itself. Australian television and FRETILIN have footage of the three months of border fighting and the Indonesian invasion. One freelance journalist has managed to get inside Timor and photograph FRETILIN since the Indonesians have sealed the borders.

The footage and stills will be used to illustrate interviews with anthropologists, Timorese refugees, representatives of FRETILIN, and journalists. They will describe Timor under the Portuguese and Fretilin. In addition, they will give eyewitness accounts of the Indonesian invasion and occupation. American news footage will document Ford and Kissinger's visit to Djakarta

just prior to the invasion. Jack Anderson, the prominent journalist and Representative Tom Harkin (Iowa) will describe America's cooperation with the Indonesian aggression and state department efforts to disguise the extent of the genocide in East Timor. Noam Chomsky of M.I.T. will pinpoint the strategic considerations that led America to support the Indonesians and explain the news blackout in the U.S. press. Possibly, Senator Edward Kennedy (Massachusetts), who has supported the East Timorese in the past, will also give an interview.

The end of the film will move back to the Timorese refugee camps in Portugal and FRETILIN to find out what the Timorese hope for their own future. At the same time, the film will look at the immediate and pressing need for food and medical supplies of the Timorese refugees in Portugal.

The movie will chronologically document Timor's transition from an isolated but ethnically unified country to a captive province of the Indonesians. Although there will be a narrator, as much as possible the film will be narrated by the people we interview. Each stage of the story will be described by those who know it best. Within the context of this account of the fate of East Timor, five points will be stressed:

1. Explanation and description of the devastation caused by the Indonesians.
2. Examination of American involvement with and approval of Indonesia's invasion.
3. Critique of the role of the American press in distorting and ignoring the Indonesian aggression.
4. Objective expression of FRETILIN's continued existence and resistance to the Indonesians.
5. Description of the plight of Timorese refugees, particularly in Portugal.

The result should be the highest form of factual documentary, exposing and bringing to public attention a little known case of massive social injustice. It is only when the truth is known that remedies can be found.

BUDGET I - Minimum

Writer/director - 4 months	$4,000
Editor - 3 months	$3,500
Assistant editor - 3 months	2,000
Cameraperson (with equipment) - 10 days	3,500
Soundperson (with equipment) - 10 days	2,000
Narrator	250
Travel (within U.S.A.)	750
Food (within U.S.A.)	400
Travel (round trip to Portugal and 10 days stay - director)	1,500
Office and phone - 4 months	1,000
40 rolls (8 hours) 7247 color, negative, 16 mm. film - purchase, process, workprint	8,000
16,000 feet, mag stock	500
Sound transfer - free at lab	0
Stock footage duplication	400
Stock footage rights	1,000
Steenbeck editing machine rental - 3 months	1,500
Editing supplies	500
Supplementary equipment rental - lights, cables	500
Narration recording	50
Titles	750
Negative cutting	1,200
Sound mix - 13 hours	2,000
Optical track	150
Answer print	600
Internegative	1,500
5 16 mm. prints	600
	$38,150
	+ 3,815 (10%)
	$41,965